

Aquarium at Fort Fisher to Premier Student Film on Climate Change

The North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher will host the world premiere of a film titled “We Sea Change: A Students’ Perspective on Climate and a Changing World” at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, September 28, 2011. Aquarium educator Megan Ennes has worked with four students and a teacher from Isaac Bear Early College High School to create the film. “It has been amazing to watch the change these students have gone through,” says Ennes. “They went from having little knowledge of climate change to being very passionate and vocal about being good stewards of the environment. The week after we filmed our student actions, they all came back and said they had been chasing their parents around all week to set the thermostat at the right temperature. They’ve really taken this project to heart”.

The film began as an “action project” for Coastal America Partnership’s Third National Student Summit on the Oceans and Coasts. Coastal America is a non-profit collaboration of representatives from government, private-sector and other organizations, dedicated to addressing coastal environmental challenges. The summit took place in Washington, D.C., in February 2011 and focused on the relationship between ocean and climate.

Each group attending the summit was required to complete an action project that related to the ocean and climate. The North Carolina delegation decided to create a film for students which would survey the possible impacts of a changing climate in the Cape Fear Region.

To learn more about climate and the Cape Fear Region, the group interviewed experts and non-experts on all fronts of this issue, from small-business owners to scientists investigating climate change. Ecologists, climatologists, and even restaurant owners participated in the interview process. Interviewees included: Dr. Doug Gamble, climatologist at UNCW; Dr. Anthony Snider, professor of environmental studies at UNCW; Captain Doug Springer of Wilmington Water Tours; Kemp Burdette, Cape Fear River Keeper®; Dr. Paul Hosier, barrier island ecologist at UNCW; Brad Jones and Craig Love, owners of SurfHouse Café and Shop; Andy Wood, education director for Audubon North Carolina; Matt Collogan, environmental education program manager at Airlie Gardens; Keith Farmer, herpetologist at the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher; and Zac Keith of Oceana, an international non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the world’s ocean.

After learning about climate and how it might impact their region, the students wanted to explore unique habitats in the area. They went on field trips to Bald Head Island, Fort Fisher, Kure Beach, Carolina Beach, Downtown Wilmington, and many other locations in Wilmington. Along the way, the students kept the camera rolling. By the time they were done researching the area, they had several hours of footage. It is all being edited into a 20-minute film to be shown at the Aquarium and in schools around the area. As a supplement, Ennes has created a high school curriculum to help teachers integrate the film into their classrooms. The film and curriculum will be offered, free of charge, online.

Ennes and the students are inviting the public to join them for their movie premiere, scheduled for September 28, 2011, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Aquarium. To help support the film, organizations from around the region will participate in the event, hosting interactive educational booths throughout the building. The organizations will include UNCW SurfRider Foundation, Airlie Gardens, and the Cape Fear Museum. The film will likely be shown more than once, with the first screening scheduled for 7:00 p.m. and a panel discussion to follow. There will be no charge to attend the event. For more information please contact Megan Ennes at 910-458-8257 ext 234 and check out the students’ website at <http://capefearstudentsummit.wikispaces.com>